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ABSTRACT

Carnegie Corporation invited 11 high school and middle school principals representing city schools serving minority or racially mixed disadvantaged communities to participate in a conference on the role of the principal in urban schools. These principals provided evidence that strong leadership can turn the most violent, crime-ridden, racially torn institution into a place of instruction and learning. Kenneth Tewel, the organizer of the conference, studied three urban principals recognized as effective leaders of high schools in crisis to examine the long-term impact of their behavior upon the school community. When faced with a crisis, they all operated on intuition, relying on any available sources of support to help them begin the change process. None was aware of the theoretical underpinnings of the strategies they were using, and at least two were unaware of the ways the changes they instituted might affect the school's culture. Results of the conference indicated that: (1) principals must be much more than instructional leaders; (2) principals need supportive networks and training; (3) schools must balance the social service and instructional needs of children; and (4) more knowledge about the actual conditions under which principals manage urban schools is needed. (ETS)

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The Urban School Principal: The Rocky Road to Instructional Leadership

As principal of Clara Westropp Middle School in Cleveland, Melvin Jones is in his office only a small portion of the school day. Much of his time is spent "walking and talking"—in the hallways or outside the building—keeping in close touch with his students. "Children have to see, hear, smell and touch you, or else they start doing bad things."

Clara Westropp has been a troubled school, serving a disadvantaged minority community in a city under court order to integrate since 1978. Over 600 of its students are bussed in, so Jones walks and talks at the bus stop before and after school, every day. He shoots basketball with his students and attends their track meets, and if he sees a youngster causing trouble off school grounds after school hours, "I'll chase him through the neighborhood if I have to."

All this walking and talking leaves him little time for curriculum development or for exercising his role as instructional leader, but Jones was brought in to "clean up" Clara Westropp. The school had four principals in the four years prior to

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his appointment and was ranked last in academic achievement out of 24 schools in the district. "The principal is supposed to be a curriculum specialist, but I don't know what that is," he says. "I was hired to be a climate manager."

Clara Westropp is not the first school that Jones has turned around. "I have a reputation for putting out fires." While improving instruction is his ultimate goal, "I can't teach children if they're outside, in the hallway or the lavatory. The only way I can do my job is to get these children into the classroom."

Frequently Jones is called on to provide social services to his students. Teenage pregnancy is a problem in the community, and Jones is involved in a local Planned Parenthood program. When asked, he provides personal counseling to pregnant students and their parents. Lack of proper nutrition is another problem that children bring into the school. "The only reason some of these kids are coming to class is breakfast and lunch." If a student loses his lunch card, Jones finds a way to feed him. "Kids need to eat before they can learn."

They also need self-respect and a sense of ownership of the school, Jones believes. "I teach my children to say, 'This is my book, my chair, my bus, my school.' "

Even though Jones would prefer to spend more time improving the educational program of the school, the role he was trained for, he must be doing something right, because in the four years that he has been principal, Clara Westropp has moved from 24th to 6th in the academic ranking of schools in the district.

Jones was one of 11 high school and middle school principals invited by Carnegie Corporation to participate in a conference on the role of the principal in urban schools, held at the foundation's offices on March 14 and 15, 1985. The group represented a diverse array of city schools serving minority or racially mixed disadvantaged communities across the nation. All the participants are known to be among the most innovative and dedicated school principals in the country. Many of them have brought schools out of a crisis situation and are now presiding over stable institutions, even if they remain troubled. In addition to Jones, the conferees included the following:

Robert Acuna is principal of Pueblo High School in Tucson. Seventy-five percent of Pueblo's 1,700 students are Hispanic, and a small number are native American. When Acuna took over, Pueblo was suffering from a 40 percent dropout rate and an 18 percent daily absentee rate. His first priority was to get the students back into school. In this he enlisted the community's support, and the effort succeeded.

Terry Brooks, principal of Highlands Middle School in Louisville, works in a heterogeneous but integrated community. "Everybody at our school was either for Gary Hart or for Jesse Jackson [as president]," he recalls. Some of his students have never seen a word processor, others do their homework on them.

Mara Clisby, principal of Artesia High School in Lakewood, California, came in when Artesia was a "gang-ridden" school, and academic achievement was at a low ebb. Since then, test scores and attendance rates have improved and so has cohesiveness among the students. Clisby described her school as "a family," in which students and teachers have come to respect themselves and each other.

Riletta Cream has been principal of Camden High School in New Jersey for 13 years. Only 17 percent of the area's population pays taxes. Many of the students are emotionally troubled and are apathetic about learning. Despite these problems, Camden was the first school to collaborate on a program with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, preparing a contingent of ants for a trip into space. It has what Cream calls a "topflight basketball team." Cream "tolerates no foolishness inside the school."

Helen Hatcher is principal of Francisco Middle School in San Francisco. Francisco has a school population with backgrounds in 24 different languages. Most of the students are Asian. Fifty percent of the student body require instruction in English as a second language. Hatcher found it difficult to focus on programmatic changes until her second year as principal. Her first year was spent gaining control of the school and "trying to cope" with a staff that was "demoralized and distrusting."

Rubye McClendon is principal of Benjamin E. Mays High School in Atlanta. Mays is a "magnet" school for students concentrating on mathematics and science. It was a "good school" when she took over; the challenge for her has been to keep it that way.

Abel Reyna presides over Escobar Junior High School in San Antonio. Ninety percent of the students there are Mexican American, and 75 percent are not proficient in English. Located in one of the poorest districts in Texas, Escobar has limited resources. Says Reyna, "I don't know what it is to be in a school where students are well fed." Unlike many northern urban schools, Escobar does not have a history of violence. Students endure what Reyna calls the "quiet failure" of emotional withdrawal, low self-confidence, and low achievement.

Frank Sellew is principal of Maury High School in Norfolk. Maury has 1,850 students from a community that includes upper-income and working-class families as well as Navy personnel. It was, Sellew says, in a state of decline when he was appointed principal, with a high dropout rate and a lot of violence.

Kenneth Tewel became principal of Brooklyn's George Westinghouse Vocational and Technical High School after heading Franklin K. Lane High School in Queens. Lane in the mid-seventies was known as the "leper" of the New York City school system, riven by racial strife, drug problems, and crime. Located in an all-white, blue-collar neighborhood, it was a predominantly minority school from which white students had fled and was under court order to integrate. Tewel described his success at implementing a school integration plan, instilling order, and turning Franklin into a place of learning as "his proudest professional achievement." It was "not just a

job, it was a crusade." In the fall of 1985, Tewel resigned from Westinghouse to join the faculty of Queens College.

Curtis Wells, principal of Madison Park High School in Boston, was formerly principal of Timoly Middle School, a troubled institution when he was appointed. It had, he recalls, the reputation for being a "beat-'em-up school." Children were afraid to go there, and parents were afraid to send them. Like the other principals at the conference, Wells found it essential at first to be "visible in the community, knocking on doors and letting people know you were going to help."

Dealing with Schools' Different Stages of Development

"The number of urban schools that are in serious trouble is small but significant," notes Tewel, who organized the conference and who was involved in the Ford Foundation's City High School Recognition Program.* "It is from these schools that come many of the statistics in crime, drug abuse, and unemployment. The failure of such schools to do their job creates the public perception that city schools generally are not doing their job. It further creates an unwarranted pessimism that anything can be done to improve the situation."

Yet the experience of the principals who attended the conference is testimony to the fact that strong leadership *can* turn the most violent, crime-ridden, racially torn institution from a battlefield back into a place of instruction and learning. The issue is not whether it can be done, but whether it can be done so that the groundwork is laid for pursuing further changes in the educational program once a school has been stabilized or, further, for sustaining educational improvements after a principal's tenure has come to an end.

Says Tewel, "Sometimes the seeds of alienation and factionalism are planted in the period when quick, firm action is needed. The principals run roughshod over faculty members who stand in their way, damaging the relationships with the very persons who will be needed to sustain and extend the innovations once these are implemented."

Schools go through several stages of development, requiring different leadership styles, believes Tewel. Some situations appear to need an authoritarian approach, others call for a more collaborative style. What concerns him is that "a lot of principals can't shift their mode of leadership to fit changed circumstances. They carry their battlefield mentality into the less critical phases of the school's evolution. As a result, they are unprepared to assume a more moderate, collaborative mode once the school is past the crisis. This can create new fissures within the school community, blocking further innovation."

Says Tewel of his experience at Franklin K. Lane, "I had to be authoritarian to gain the support of the community and push through a new educational program for the school. A few of the teachers saw the redesign plan as an exciting opportunity for innovation. But most were concerned about safety and security and would have preferred that no new programs be implemented at all. Unfortunately they had difficulty shifting to a situation in which instructional concerns superseded disciplinary ones." Among other measures, Tewel moved forcefully to transfer teachers judged to be performing unsatisfactorily. He also isolated those teachers considered most resistant to change. "I am not proud of some of the bullying tactics that I employed," he admits. "However, at the time I was unaware of other options."

The history of Franklin K. Lane following Tewel's departure in 1981 is filled with ironies. Under the new principal, some of the most innovative components of the redesign plan were dismantled. Parents began to complain that standards of acceptable student behavior and teacher performance were being relaxed. Safety and security once again became a major focus of the United Federation of Teachers chapter. "Strangely enough, some of the same teachers who once considered the redesign plan so onerous began to clamor for its restitution," comments Tewel.

Tewel's subsequent experiences at Westinghouse, which he

*See *City High Schools: A Recognition of Progress*. A Ford Foundation report, 1984.

describes as a "safe, effective school," were of a different character altogether. "In the early 1970s, Westinghouse had indeed been a violent and troublesome place. But when I came there, a lot of the rot had been gotten out by my predecessor, who established order. That opened up space for me to begin a collaborative process — to persuade the faculty to assume ownership and responsibility for the school and its programs."

At Westinghouse, Tewel saw himself in two roles. "First I saw myself as a source of ideas — the facilitator bringing groups together. Then I saw myself as the mechanic, moving things from the planning to the initiating stage and then to the implementation of new programs. It's all the things that can go wrong after a program is adopted that burn people out. People like me must see to it that teachers who want to make improvements are supported.

"So I saw myself as a manager of institutional change. An authoritarian leader cannot do that. You have to get the teachers to assume ownership of the educational process."

Tewel's observations of colleagues under the Ford Foundation program, and of his own behavior at Lane and Westinghouse, cemented his determination to learn more about the role of the principal in a crisis situation and, in particular, about what happens to the principal in the aftermath of radical institutional change. He consulted the literature and found to his surprise that there was almost no information about this subject. "Although there was a fund of knowledge concerning the relationship between schools and the change process, there was little that analyzed the role of the principals in dealing with a crisis situation." Moreover, Tewel found virtually no literature on the damage that might be done by school leaders trying to clean up a crisis.

Tewel decided to carry out his own study of three urban principals* recognized as effective leaders of high schools in crisis and to examine the long-term impact of their behavior upon the school community. He looked at their experiences, at what made them effective, at their problems and needs, and at the price, if any, they paid for their successes. He carried out the study, he says, "to answer the deeply perplexing questions that arose from my own experience at Lane."

Tewel's report is revealing. All three principals held identical views of their mission: to resolve the crisis atmosphere and create the conditions under which students could attend school safely and learn. Feeling they had been brought in to "save the school," they assumed a paternalistic perspective toward the school. One went so far as to say that his school "was the best child I ever had." Each principal tended to adopt an authoritarian attitude toward the staff and to maintain tight control over the change process. And each, says Tewel, took on a "crisis mentality in which action to save the school took precedence over all else."

What looms large in his analysis is that the principals who were faced with a crisis operated pretty much on intuition, grabbing what sources of support they could find to help them begin the change process. As one principal put it, "I saw the problems, developed the solutions, and plowed ahead." None of the principals was familiar with the theoretical underpinnings of the strategies they were using; rather, all three made decisions "by the seat of their pants."

In addition to their unfamiliarity with effective strategies for managing change, at least two principals were unaware of the ways in which the changes they instituted might affect the school's culture. Like Tewel at Lane, they occasionally resorted to coercion and intimidation because they did not know other methods of accomplishing their objectives.

In analyzing the behavior of the three principals in his study, Tewel concluded that "thought and action were not congruent." The principals were "out of touch with the ways that their attitudes affected their behavior and were also unaware of the negative impact of their behavior on others. They viewed failure as resulting from inadequacies in others rather than as emanating from their own behavior.

"There was a paradox in the principals' claim that they wanted feedback from others," says Tewel. "They said they needed it but were unable to find it within the school's formal organization. They claimed they received feedback only from mentors and friends outside the system; at the same time, they behaved in ways that shut them off from others in the school. When asked, the principals showed knowledge of techniques to improve communication with staff, and they were able to list a variety of approaches that could be employed. Although the principals knew exactly what to do, they neglected to do it."

While the battlefield mentality of these principals might have been partly self-inflicted, much of it, Tewel theorizes, stemmed from the lack of psychological support they were given in these

*Unpublished doctoral dissertation, *On the Decision-Making of Principals in Urban High Schools in Crisis*, Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1985.

stressful circumstances. The principals "felt lonely and isolated, without personal contact with co-workers." These feelings of isolation were felt more strongly by the two principals whose appointment had been opposed by their schools' faculty. As one of them in the study described it, "Change was necessary. There was no choice, but having to make all the decisions and be responsible for them made for even more difficult days. It made me feel more alone."

Much more serious, perhaps, the principals were given little help from central administration personnel in implementing the change process. Few additional resources were given to an incoming principal to help him or her turn the school around. There were "no attempts at staff development, which requires substantial resources. Teachers were not given release time for curriculum development or planning of change." (Tewel himself discovered that as soon as Franklin K. Lane was on the road to recovery, board of education officials lost interest in his school. "Lane was no longer a constant thorn in their sides, and the central office had to tend to problems with other schools.")

"Would additional resources have made a difference?" Tewel asks. "We do not know. Would teachers have been less an impediment to the principals' efforts at innovation if they had been more actively incorporated into the process and given rewards for their participation? Again we do not know. We do know that the situations were desperate and that something had to be done at each school immediately if the schools were to survive as educational institutions. The costs could be calculated in the brutalization of relations between teachers and the innovating principals."

At the Carnegie Corporation Conference

The Corporation organized the meeting of urban school principals in order to draw further upon the experience and wisdom of urban school leaders who have been successful in improving their institutions under the most trying of circumstances. The questions put to them were, Under what conditions can the improvements that urban school principals make be maintained in the long term? How can it foster leaders like these principals and replicate their achievements in other schools?

While no definitive answers were forthcoming, the participants made the following points:

The Multifaceted Mission of Principals:

- The recent national reports on schools define principals as instructional leaders focusing almost exclusively on the academic performance of students, but urban school principals, like their schools, have a multifaceted mission. They are administrators, head teachers, moral leaders, role models, community workers, social service providers, and even fundraisers, all rolled into one. This is especially the case with principals who take over schools beset with violence, rampant absenteeism, and high dropout rates. Remarked Tewel, "The job description says you are an instructional leader, but there are a thousand and one things that interfere. I can't handle all the problems that arise and be an instructional leader. I'm not in control of my agenda. I plan it out and it's filled with instructional items or arrangements for collaborating with community groups — and then the kids come to school without

breakfast and there's a problem with the bus, and plaster's falling from the ceiling, and there's a dispute between two community organizations or some of my children on the way home, or there's been a crime: The personal needs of kids often preempt and supersede my goal to be the instructional manager of the schools."

• Even in a well-ordered school with well-fed students and a strong academic program, the principal cannot function solely as an instructional leader. McClendon learned this during her first year as principal of Benjamin E. Mays High School. "No one told me that what you have to do is be out there, walking and talking in the community." In her first year she devoted herself entirely to instruction, which she later realized was a mistake. There was no one to maintain order in the school and nurture an ongoing relationship with the community. Now she delegates many of her instructional tasks and spends more time doing adminstrative and community work.

• Being a principal is a process. According to Sellew, it begins with "taking control" of a school and then providing it with an academic focus. The curriculum may be the second or third, but it is rarely the first, step for principals. Program changes do not begin until the second year. "Principals who have excelled at rebuilding schools in crisis may have to retrain themselves to be curriculum leaders instead of disciplinarians," Clisby suggested. "Somewhere along the line we have to come to grips with the fact that the role of an administrator is different from when we first became administrators. We were not chosen to be curriculum leaders. How do we learn to be instructional leaders?"

The Need for Support and Training:

• In juggling the multiple demands made on them daily, principals rarely have time to reflect on the need for systemic changes in their schools. "We have become experts at surviving and controlling a faulty system," confessed Acuna. The participants as a group expressed the desire for released time to analyze more broadly and dispassionately the mechanisms for improving schools.

• The strain of coping is aggravated by the sense of isolation that urban school principals feel. As one principal put it, "You support everyone else — students, parents, and teachers — but who takes care of you?" For Jones, "there are very few pats on the back for managing well." Said Wells, "You go into your office and close your door, and when someone opens it, he comes in not to give you support but another problem." Being "at the top" in your own school has its rewards, acknowledged Reyna, "but sometimes you feel like Atlas holding up the world."

• Supportive networks are needed for principals, enabling them to share ideas and gain emotional and moral support. Wells described the "validation" he received from attending seminars at the Principals' Center at Harvard University. It gave him a much-needed "sense of camaraderie, a feeling of belonging to a group of people who suffer, rise, and fall in the same circumstances." Tewel proposed the development of a national network of urban high school principals, based at one or several universities, which would draw together principals for study and reflection and for learning new and better ways of initiating change.

• Training for principals was considered important. Several of the participants were thrown into their jobs on short notice, having had scarcely any preparation. (In New York City, principals are typically selected no more than 12 hours before the start of the new term.) "Schools should establish internship programs," said Cream. One participant urged that principals' training include coursework on innovation and organizational change, giving future leaders a sense of how to use human and material resources in the innovation process and how to assess the sources of support and resistance to change. Clisby thought assistant principals should be groomed for leadership positions by the head principals they serve. "Hire the kind of people who can lead, and train them to lead, not follow." Still, it was difficult for the group to describe the qualities of a successful principal or to recommend any specific training techniques. "We have certain things that come from inside," Cream averred, "a gut sense of how to proceed that has nothing to do with training or networking." These things would help, she said, but "something other than training and networking makes a good administrator."

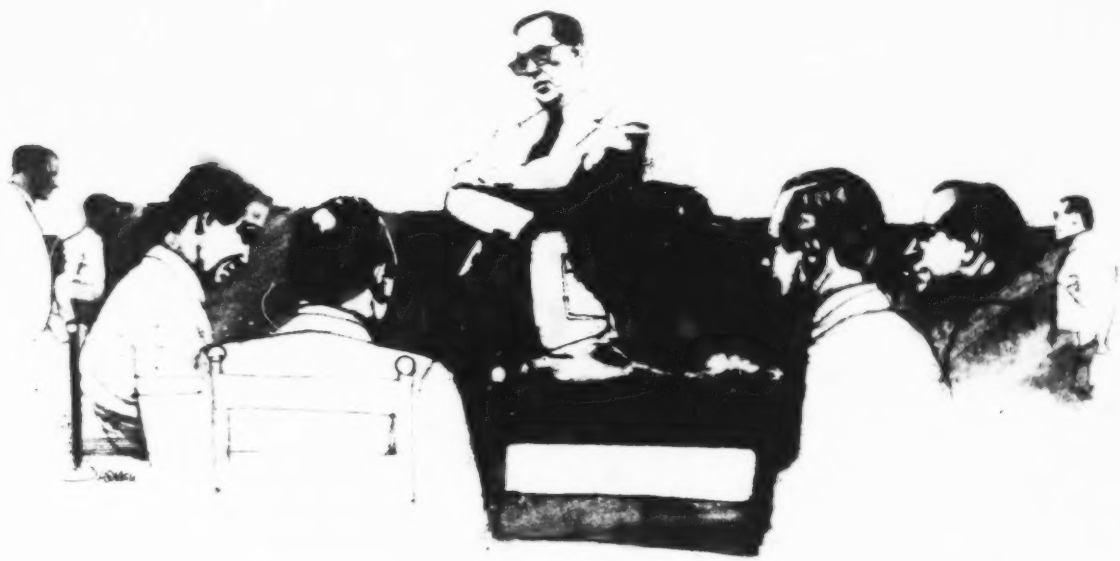
• Lack of support from their own central offices is a major problem for principals. Several conferees observed that improving a school often leads to cutbacks of services. The better the job done, the fewer the resources coming to the principals. Others noted that the central office affords few opportunities or time for principals to meet and share ideas. Sometimes, indeed, the central office sets up a competitiveness among schools that is destructive to a sharing of ideas within a district. In the view of some principals, the central office "exercises too much petty control over budgetary and other matters." Sellew said his central office overemphasizes "time on task." Judgment of the quality of teaching in any given subject is made according to the amount of time spent on it in the classroom. "People are getting crazy about time. It's supervision by minutes." Principals need more room to practice what Brooks called the "artistry" of being a principal.

Balancing the Social Service and Instructional Needs of Children:

• While urban schools must respond to the emotional and social needs of their students, their basic mission is to educate. "Schools have to define what they are," Clisby stressed. "And what they are is educational institutions. Principals are educators, not psychiatrists, doctors, nurses, or ministers. We need services around our schools. We need scaffolding. The communities around us must understand that." But whether city schools have, in fact, the power to define themselves is open to question. "What we call ourselves is not the issue," Tewel rejoindered. "The issue is what everyone else calls us. The school occupies a uniquely important place in American life, a place it doesn't occupy in other countries. In American society, every time a problem develops, it is put onto the school to solve, whether it is sex education, alienation, the absorption

of immigrants, health, or raising funds for the Statue of Liberty. Whatever society needs done is left to the school to handle. So the question for me becomes, 'How do I restructure the schools to meet society's demands, understanding that, although we have a social mission, our instructional mission is paramount?'"

• In some communities, schools perforce become multiservice centers, with representatives from youth services and other agencies assigned to work out of the school. In Reyna's district, schools have more "credibility and power than public agencies and even the police. Perhaps schools should not be held responsible for delivering services, but they are," he said. Cream warned, "The school is the last stronghold we have for controlling American society. But the schools can't do it alone."



• Schools are not sufficiently supported by community groups or parents. Communities are not providing adequate social services or effectively seeking solutions to social problems. Instead, McClendon noted, "many community groups and parents feel there are no limitations to the school's responsibility." She described her difficulty in establishing a task force of community leaders, parents, and school officials to address the growing problem of teenage gangs. "It took an hour just to get the idea of cooperation and shared responsibility across to them." Yet we have common problems. "We're going to have to involve the community."

In sum, the social mission that has been thrust upon urban schools is undefined; and because it is undefined, it is unrecognized, and therefore the principals do not gain the support — from the central office, within the educational professions, in the networks, and in the community—that they need. Unless that social role is recognized and dealt with, school principals, regarded in most national reports as the key agents of change in schools, may well continue to work under conditions of isolation and extreme stress that push them to maintain tight control over the change process as the only way they can cope.

Improving the Knowledge Base:

• There is a "desperate need" for more knowledge about the actual conditions under which principals manage urban schools. In particular, there is a need for information on crisis resolution. First, more research should be carried out on how constituent groups — parents, faculty members, assistant principals, and department chairpersons — can be used to help move a school out of a crisis situation. Second, because urban, suburban, and rural schools have different "etiologies of crisis," studies should examine the nature and types of crisis in different schools and the process of crisis resolution in them. Third and most important, the process of change in urban schools should be documented beyond the stages of crisis resolution. If a larger font of knowledge were to be developed, with schools analyzed by context, crisis type, principals' responses, and constituency action, there would be a solid foundation of experience from which innovating principals could derive lessons and, conceivably, avoid unnecessary second-generation problems once a crisis is past. ■

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*Effective summer 1986.

"THE CONSCIENCE OF THE CORPORATION"

Florence Anderson, corporate secretary of the Corporation from 1954 to 1975, died on December 16, 1985. Known to her colleagues as "the conscience of the Corporation," Miss Anderson was admired throughout the foundation field for her high standards of professionalism and strong sense of responsibility to the public. As secretary she served under three presidents, including John W. Gardner and Alan Pifer. Mr. Gardner called her "one of the ablest foundation officers of her generation" and "the central nervous system of the foundation for more than 30 years." Mr. Pifer said, "Florence Anderson was a loyal colleague who was devoted to the Corporation and a tough-minded professional who kept several presidents in line."

Miss Anderson joined the foundation's staff in 1934, having graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 1931. She was promoted to administrative assistant five years later, becoming assistant secretary in 1947 and associate secretary in 1951. Her appointment to secretary in 1954 made her one of the few women of that time to hold an executive position in a major foundation. Miss Anderson also served as secretary of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching from 1955 to 1974. In addition to her administrative duties, she made an important contribution to the Corporation's grant program. She was responsible for its pioneering grants in continuing education for women and in nontraditional study.

For those of us who knew Miss Anderson, we will remember her generosity in sharing her deep wisdom about foundation operations and her diligence in monitoring them. We will greatly miss the support and guidance that she continued to provide up to the time of her death.

TRUSTEE NEWS

Two new trustees were elected at the annual meeting of the Corporation's board on December 12, 1985.

Mary Patterson McPherson, president of Bryn Mawr College, has worked in the field of education since she began her career in 1959 as an instructor of philosophy at the University of Delaware. She serves as a trustee of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, The Brookings Institution, Agnes Irwin School, and The Shipley School.

Laurence A. Tisch, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Loews Corporation, is also chairman of the board of CNA Financial Corporation and a director of its insurance subsidiaries. He is a director of the Bulova Watch Company, Inc., CBS Inc., Automatic Data Processing Corporation, and Petrie Stores Corporation.

STAFF NEWS

Adetokunbo O. Lucas, a Nigerian scientist and public health administrator, was appointed chair of the foundation's grant program concerned with strengthening human resources in developing countries. He will join the Corporation's staff in the summer of 1986. For the past ten years Dr. Lucas has directed the Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases based at the World Health Organization in Geneva. Under his direction the Program has organized networks of cooperating scientists and institutions working within developing and developed countries, including the United States, on aspects of tropical disease research.

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